

GARVAN TRAIL

Madison, CT

This town-owned property is named for John S. Garvan who once owned the land that is now the Surf Club. Remnants of the old Garvan Estate are still visible near the salt marsh and near Garvan point. This easy trail (marked by blue blazes) is comprised of two loops connected by a boardwalk and includes an intertidal zone, sand dune, salt marsh, fresh water marsh, old fields becoming forest, and a late state red-cedar forest. A number of sign boards offer mini ecology "lessons."

The first part of the trail has an interpretive sign that describes the beach and intertidal zone. Beach roses, grasses, seaside goldenrod, mullein, bayberry, and beach plum are prevalent in this area. The sand is a reddish hue and is "soft" garnet mixed with magnetite torn from the tougher rocks of Garvan Point by pounding waves.

A causeway leads across the salt marsh and the next interpretive sign. In this high salt marsh, salt water mixes with the fresh water of the stream. These high productive areas not only produce significant amounts of plant material, but are important fish breeding and nursery grounds. Plant and fish detritus, in turn, nourish the area's shellfish population.

The trail then crosses an old stone bridge and borders the marsh that is now predominantly fresh water. Continuing straight ahead, the trail turns onto a boardwalk with a third interpretive sign for the Fresh Water Marsh. In the fall, marshmallow blooms in abundance and attracts migrating monarch butterflies. Past the boardwalk the trail forms an upper loop. Take the loop to the left through the old cedar forest to where it turns sharply right following a stone wall on the left. At an opening in the wall, the trail forms a "T." Turn left through this opening into an old field filling with cedars and black cherries.



Photo by the Town of Madison

The trail turns to overlook an athletic field and then turns back into the old cedar forest. Passing through a stone wall, there is an old, dead cedar tree that was choked out by taller growth and vines. The tree's branch structure tells us that at one time, the tree grew here by itself in an open area. The loop soon ends again at the "T" and the trail connects back towards the left to the boardwalk and back to the Trailheads and parking areas.

Directions and Parking:

Take Boston Post Road (Route 1) to West Wharf Road. South to Surf Club Road which leads to the westernmost parking areas. Trailhead 1 is by the beach sand dune near the boat racks. Madison Resident Beach passes are required to access the Surf Club areas during the period between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Permitted Activities:

This is an interpretive nature trail hike. Dogs are permitted on leash only during the time period the day after Labor Day to the day before Memorial Day. Please bag and pick up all dog waste.

For more information about this location, contact:

Town of Madison
Beach and Recreation Department
203 245-5623

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The descriptive information for this trail is excerpted from the MLCT's Madison Trails Guide.

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